

July 15, 2002

Public Notice for 401 Water Quality Certification
Pacific Lumber Company Eel River Gravel Extraction Operations
Humboldt County

On July 1, 2002, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO) requesting Federal Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification and California Code of Regulations Water Quality Certification for PALCO's Eel River Gravel Extraction Operations located in Humboldt County, California. The application was deemed complete on July 10, 2002.

The extraction sites are located along the Eel River in Humboldt County, California. The extraction of river-run gravel along the Eel River has been occurring since the early 1900's. PALCO will extract gravel from ten (10) sites along the Eel River. These sites include Scotia Bar, Scotia Truck Shop Bar, Dinner Bar, Three Mile Bar, Elinor Bar, Holmes (Larabee) Bar, South Fork (Dyerville) Bar, Bowlby Bar, Vroman Bar, and Maynard (McCann) Bar. The receiving water is the Eel River located in the Eel River Hydrologic Unit No. 111.00.

The proposed project involves the extraction of up to 30,000 cubic yards of river-run gravel per gravel bar for a total of 150,000 cubic yards of extracted material. The methods used for the gravel extraction include skimming, excavation pits, excavation alcoves, and trenching. Recent extractions have included the use of scrapers, tracked bulldozers, front-end loaders or excavators which skim exposed gravel bars adjacent to the low flow channel.

Potential impacts from gravel extraction activities include loss of channel stability, changes in deposition patterns, changes in width-to-depth ratio, and loss of scour potential causing pool filling. PALCO will implement Best Management Practices (BMP's) to minimize direct impacts to the channel. The BMP's include the use of existing roads and processing sites. All excavation machinery will be kept out of the low flow and/or wetted channel at all times. When extraction sites are designated and designed near an active channel, a one-foot minimum vertical offset from the surveyed low flow channel water surface or a minimum horizontal offset must be incorporated depending on site-specific locations. The offsets maintain the integrity of the channel and prevent extraction materials from entering the main or secondary channels. General guidelines for minimizing the effects of the project are included in a Letter of Permission (LOP) 02-1 issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Humboldt County Planning Commission, as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, adopted a Negative Declaration on May 23, 1996 for PALCO's gravel extraction activities in the Eel River.

The project is scheduled to begin in August 2002 and end October 15, 2002. Staff is proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and Title 23, California Code of Regulations, Sections 3830-3869. Comments on this project should be submitted to **Miguel Villicana** at villm@rb1.swrcb.ca.gov, within 21 days of the posting of this notice.